

United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/834

25 February 1991

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ Security Council holds further consultations on situation between Iraq and Kuwait.
- ◆ Secretary-General repeats appeal to Members of United Nations and of specialized agencies for voluntary contributions to finance United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus.
- ◆ Leaders of major United Nations humanitarian agencies to meet in New York on Thursday to discuss relief needs of countries affected by Gulf war.
- ◆ International Committee of Red Cross appeals again on behalf of civilian and military victims of war and calls on parties to fully respect and implement provisions of international humanitarian law.
- ◆ Outer Space Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee discusses use of nuclear power sources in outer space.
- ◆ Global conference at Food and Agriculture Organization to discuss food standards and chemicals in food and food trade.

The Security Council held further consultations this afternoon on the situation in the Gulf.

Meanwhile, Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar has commented on the beginning of the ground war in the Persian Gulf.

Asked by correspondents this morning on arriving at Headquarters how he felt about the allied forces going into Iraqi territory, the Secretary-General replied that it appeared to be "indispensable in order to obtain the objective which is exclusively to liberate Kuwait".

Mr. Perez de Cuellar was also asked if he thought the allied forces were using resolution 678 (1990) -- the Security Council's decision to set the

(more)

2046P

For information media—not an official record

15 January deadline for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait -- not only to liberate Kuwait but to overthrow President Saddam Hussein. In reply, the Secretary-General said he had never heard anybody admit that one of the objectives was to topple the Saddam Hussein Government. He added that there was no mandate for such a goal in the United Nations resolutions.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar further said that history showed that hostilities and diplomacy could live together and that he hoped that there was still a possibility to minimize loss of life.

In a related development, the Secretary-General's Spokesman said today, in reply to a question, that Mr. Perez de Cuellar had received a letter from the Iraqi delegation addressed to the Security Council, which was now being translated from Arabic. The Spokesman said he believed the letter did not request "any specific action", and added that it came from the Iraqi President.

As threats of a ground war in the Persian Gulf intensified, the Security Council met in a closed formal meeting on Saturday, 23 February, to debate the situation between Iraq and Kuwait. At the end of the meeting, the Secretary-General said in a statement that the Council was meeting at a crucial hour. Openings towards the resolution of the conflict had been clearly revealed during the last two days, he said, and it would be a tragic in the extreme if the opportunities that had been created were to be lost. The Secretary-General said that since the beginning of the crisis there had been devastation on a vast scale and the consequences to a vital and most strategic part of the world were still "literally incalculable".

The Secretary-General has appealed to all Member countries of the United Nations member and its specialized agencies for voluntary contributions for the financing of the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). Mr. Perez de Cuellar has repeatedly expressed his concern about the financial situation of the Force.

In a letter addressed to the Member countries, the Secretary-General said that it was "unfair" that the troop-contributing countries should absorb the shortfall of UNFICYP, which as of the end of January was estimated at \$165 million.

As a result, he said, the United Nations, which shares a third of the total cost of the Force, had been able to meet the claims of troop-contributing countries only up to December 1980; it was clear that "the highly unsatisfactory situation must not be allowed to continue".

Leaders of major United Nations humanitarian agencies are due to meet in New York on Thursday to discuss relief needs of countries affected by the Gulf war.

(more)

Convened by the Secretary-General, the meeting will have on its agenda a report from a joint mission of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which recently took medical supplies for distribution to people in affected areas. The senior WHO official who visited Baghdad, Dr. Ali Khogali, returned to Geneva on Saturday with other members of his team. He told journalists that the health and nutrition officials travelled freely in Baghdad and visited hospitals and health centres. They handed over enough medical supplies to meet the needs of more than 2 million mothers and children for three months. He said that the main problem at the present was water and sanitation.

The mission did not visit Kuwait. WHO officials said that an assessment mission would probably be sent there when circumstances permitted.

* * *

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has informed the United Nations that it has launched another appeal on behalf of civilian and military victims of the war. It called on all parties to fully respect and implement the provisions of international humanitarian law. It said that wounded, sick or shipwrecked soldiers from all sides must be collected, respected and protected, and that soldiers who surrendered must be spared. They should be evacuated from the front lines, removed from combat zones and taken to a place where their security could be guaranteed, the Red Cross said.

Parties to the conflict must now take steps to protect civilians, including the evacuation of non-combatants from war zones, especially wounded and sick children and the elderly, and to allow the free passage of essential supplies. The ICRC has urged all parties to conclude agreements which would establish neutralized zones.

* * *

During the past week, the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space has been discussing international efforts in space research and satellite programmes.

This morning the Committee began a debate of the use of nuclear power sources in outer space.

For the Soviet Union, Boris Khabirov said the use of the most modern technology should in no way harm human life or damage the environment. He told the Sub-Committee that in May last year, the Soviet Union had held an international conference on nuclear power in outer space. The Conference documentation had made clear the need for international co-operation in the use of nuclear power sources in space vehicles.

For India, M.G. Chandrasekhar, said it was important to achieve at least a minimum set of international principles and guidelines, which concerned the safety of human population, preservation of the environment and conduct of activities in outer space, which was the common heritage of humankind.

(more)

* * *

An international conference at the headquarters in Rome of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) next month will consider measures ensuring safer food and removing obstacles hindering the \$200 billion world food trade.

The FAO announced today that the conference on food standards, chemicals in food and food trade, to be held from 18 to 27 March, would be jointly organized by FAO and WHO, in co-operation with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

FAO Director-General Edouard Saouma, in a comment on the conference, underscored its importance, "especially coming at a time of increasing concern for food safety, and when contamination in food exports is costing developing countries millions in foreign currency, so desperately required for overall national development".

* * * * *

United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/835
26 February 1991

T U E S D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

- ◆ Security Council continues consultations on situation in Persian Gulf.
- ◆ Speakers at United Nations Seminar on Confidence- and Security-building Measures focus on application of such measures in developing countries, and in the Middle East when Gulf war ends.
- ◆ International Committee of Red Cross says it has still not received information about prisoners of war captured by Iraqi forces since 2 August 1990, and in military operations since 17 January.
- ◆ "Operation Salam" budgets \$232.4 million for 1991 humanitarian and economic assistance programmes for Afghanistan.

* * *

The Security Council held consultations early this afternoon on the current situation in the Persian Gulf. After the consultations, the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Sir David Hannay, told correspondents that the majority of the 15 Council members agreed that Iraq must comply with all 12 Council resolutions if the Council was to move forward. He said the Council President, Simbarashe Simbanenduku Mumbengegwi (Zimbabwe), would be in contact with all members of the Council, bilaterally, and with the two parties, Kuwait and Iraq. The British Ambassador stressed that the Council President would no doubt pass on to the Iraqi delegation that many of the Council's delegations felt that there had to be a clear, formal and written acceptance of all the Council resolutions if the Council was to move forward.

Late last night, in a private meeting on the same issue, the Council heard a statement by the Iraqi Ambassador, Abdul Al-Anbari, who said his Government had issued orders to Iraqi troops in Kuwait to withdraw. He said Iraq was interested in completing its withdrawal as quickly as possible.

Ambassador Al-Anbari further informed the Council that the Foreign Minister of Iraq had transmitted a message to the Soviet Foreign Minister, from President Saddam Hussein to President Mikhail Gorbachev, in which the

(more)

2065P

For information media—not an official record

Iraqi leader asked the Soviet President to make efforts to achieve a cease-fire resolution so that Iraqi troops could withdraw as quickly and safely as possible. The Iraqi Ambassador called on the Council to adopt such a resolution.

Also addressing the Council, the Permanent Representative of the Soviet Union, Yuliy M. Vorontsov, said the withdrawal had begun and that it was time for the Security Council to adopt a cease-fire resolution as quickly as possible.

The Permanent Representative of the United States, Thomas R. Pickering, told the Council the United States had seen no evidence of an Iraqi withdrawal on the ground. Allied troops were facing continuing attacks by Iraqi missiles, which had killed at least 22 Americans. He asked that Iraq make it clear that it was prepared to accept the resolutions of the Council and the coalition's proposal for withdrawal.

For the United Kingdom, Ambassador Hannay said it was not clear from the Iraqi statement whether Iraq was now willing to declare its annexation of Kuwait null and void, one of the conditions set in the Council's resolutions. The 12 resolutions were a "single corpus of international law", he said, and could not be taken to pieces.

* * *

Poverty, illiteracy and disease in Africa have created conditions that might call for a different approach to confidence-building measures from those adopted in Europe, which was once divided into two ideological blocs. That view was expressed by speakers today at a United Nations Seminar on Confidence- and Security-building Measures, which opened in Vienna yesterday.

In a discussion, speakers questioned how the European experience in such measures could be applied globally, when changes in Europe had made them outdated.

Also discussed was the possibility of applying to other regions the European experience in conflict elimination, in view of arms transfers to developing countries. The question of what measures could be taken to avoid a repetition of the situation in the Gulf, was also addressed.

Among those addressing the Seminar, Abdu O. Kinana, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation of the United Republic of Tanzania, said confidence-building measures which applied in Europe might be difficult to implement in Africa. Problems in Africa could be best solved within a regional framework, he said. For instance, member countries of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) had come together to liberate their economies from dependence on South Africa.

Speaking for China, Chen Wenqing, Research Fellow at the Beijing Institute for International Strategic Studies, said the concept of security of countries in the Asia-Pacific region was different from that of the countries

(more)

in Europe. He said the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) model of confidence- and security-building measures was hardly applicable to the Asian-Pacific region, where local wars were relatively frequent.

Yesterday morning, speakers expressed the view that the adoption of confidence- and security-building measures in Europe could help promote a lasting peace in the Middle East following the Gulf war. Heinrich Gleissner, Deputy Secretary-General for Foreign Affairs of Austria, said plans to create a stability framework for the Middle East and the Mediterranean by using CSCE as a model were of immediate interest. Social and economic problems of the region should also be tackled with the help of Western industrial countries.

Also addressing the Seminar, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Yasushi Akashi, stressed that the perspective for the Middle East should be neither strictly European nor wholly global, but somewhere in between -- an "interregional" dialogue.

Organized by the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs in co-operation with the Austrian Government, the three-day seminar is being attended by about 60 high-level experts from all regions of the world.

* * *

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) informed the United Nations today that it was sending additional staff to Saudi Arabia to deal with the increasing numbers of prisoners of war.

The ICRC said it was conducting visits to ensure the safety of captured Iraqi soldiers in accordance with the provisions of the Third Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war.

The ICRC further said it had still not received any information from Iraq on prisoners of war it had taken since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August, and in the military operations under way since 17 January. The Committee appealed to the Iraqi authorities to take immediate action to remedy what it termed a "serious situation, which constituted grave lack of respect of the Third Geneva Convention".

* * *

The Personal Representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Benon Sevan, appealed today to the international community for additional contributions to emergency relief to Afghanistan. He was making the appeal in his preface to the "Operation Salam" Programme for 1990, just released by the United Nations office co-ordinating humanitarian and economic assistance to Afghanistan.

For 1991, Mr. Sevan reported, \$232.4 million was needed. As of 6 February, some \$118 million of that had been funded, leaving a shortfall of about \$115 million for the implementation of programmes and projects this

(more)

year. Priority had been given to projects in agriculture, food aid, mine clearance, voluntary repatriation and health.

In meeting the budget gap, he said, the international community would be asked to make additional contributions to priority sectors and to fulfil previous pledges amounting to \$32.4 million.

* * * * *

United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/836

27 February 1991

W E D N E S D A Y R I G H T L I G H T S

- ◆ Iraqi Foreign Minister, in letter to President of Security Council, says Iraq agrees to comply fully with resolution 660 (1990). Calls for resolution providing for immediate cease-fire.
- ◆ Secretary-General says he is extremely pleased to see Kuwait City free from foreign occupation.
- ◆ Security Council holds consultations to consider recommendation by Secretary-General to end mandate of United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group.
- ◆ Meeting on Gulf oil spill emergency convenes in Bahrain.
- ◆ Population Commission hears call for world-wide action to deal with diverse demographic problems.

* * *

The Permanent Representative of Iraq, Abdul Amir A. Al-Anbari, delivered at noon today a letter from the Iraqi Foreign Minister to the President of the Security Council and the Secretary-General saying that Iraq had decided to accept and implement Council resolutions 660 (1990), 662 (1990) and 674 (1990) (condemning Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, declaring null and void the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait and the situation of third-State nationals in Kuwait and Iraq, respectively) if the Council would adopt a resolution providing for an immediate cease-fire.

The Iraqi Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz, said in the letter that the Iraqi armed forces had started to withdraw to the positions they were in prior to 1 August 1990 and that he hoped the withdrawal would be fully completed within the next few hours, notwithstanding the continued attacks by American and other forces during that process.

In a second letter, issued later this afternoon, the Iraqi Foreign Minister said that despite the Iraqi withdrawal at dawn, local time, the coalition forces continued to attack Iraqi forces during their withdrawal.

(more)

Speaking to correspondents before he went to see the Council President, Simbarashe Mumbengegwi of Zimbabwe, the Iraqi Ambassador said he hoped the Council would issue a resolution calling for a cease-fire and an end to all hostilities.

The Council held consultations this afternoon on the issue. However, no formal meeting was expected.

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar said this morning that he was extremely pleased to see Kuwait City free from foreign occupation, and that he had called the Kuwaiti Ambassador this morning to congratulate him.

He made the comments in reply to correspondents' questions as he entered the building. The Secretary-General also said he had not heard any news about a Security Council meeting at the ministerial level to deal with the settlement of the crisis. When asked if he thought there would be a political solution at this point, or only a military solution, he replied that the only thing he was interested in was a solution which was fair, just, in the framework of the United Nations resolutions, but still could avoid any future bloodshed.

The Security Council was scheduled to hold consultations this afternoon to consider a recommendation by the Secretary-General to bring to an end the mandate of the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group -- known as UNIIMOG.

The Group has been stationed on the border between the two countries since August 1988 to monitor the internationally recognized boundaries.

The Secretary-General said in a report to the Council that the withdrawal of the two sides' forces to the internationally recognized boundaries had at last been completed as described in the 1975 Treaty concerning the State Frontier and Neighbourly Relations between Iran and Iraq.

The Secretary-General said there was still a remaining question about establishing an area of separation and an area of limitation of armaments, which could help to reduce tension and build confidence between the parties. It had been hoped, he said, that UNIIMOG could play a role in the establishment of such an area. However, the Iranian side had informed UNIIMOG that it did not request its assistance during this process.

A three-day meeting on measures to deal with the Persian Gulf oil spill began in Bahrain yesterday.

(more)

The meeting was convened on the initiative of Badria Al-Awadi, technical and administrative co-ordinator of the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment, in co-operation with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) -- the United Nations agency concerned with maritime safety and the prevention of marine pollution.

Latest estimates of the oil spill by the President of Saudi Arabia's Meteorological and Environmental Protection Association, Abulbar Al-Gain, range from 500,000 to 3 million barrels. Analysis of aerial remote-sensing data has suggested an estimate of 2 million barrels.

The Bahrain meeting is discussing current clean-up activities, including the protection of sensitive sites in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar. Apart from the immediate crisis, it is also dealing with long-term planning, including such measures as contingency planning, equipment requirements, co-ordination by regional States and international assistance.

* * *

The Population Commission began its biennial session at Headquarters this morning with calls for world-wide action to deal with the increasingly diverse demographic problems nations will face in the coming decades.

Opening the meeting, the Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs, Rafeeuddin Ahmed, said the guidance of the Commission would be sought on the priority issues to be considered by the 1994 International Meeting on Population. Those issues included population growth, its relation to environment and development, international migration, population redistribution within countries, population and the status of women and population policies and programmes.

Also addressing the meeting, the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Nafis Sadik, stressed the need to confront numerous population issues and challenges, given the unprecedented pace at which global population was increasing.

The Director of the Population Division of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (DIESA), Shunichi Inoue, said massive geographical movements of people were now causing political, economic and social instability. With the diverse population trends in different parts of the world, international migration was likely to become one of many highly sensitive and potentially explosive demographic issues.

* * * * *

United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/837

28 February 1991

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ Security Council holds consultations in wake of proclaimed cease-fire in Persian Gulf war agreed to by all parties.
- ◆ Secretary-General says United Nations is prepared to send observer group to Gulf region as soon as possible to undertake peace-keeping function.
- ◆ Committee of United Nations Trust Fund for South Africa meets at Headquarters to discuss ways and means to help victims of apartheid.
- ◆ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization prepares \$2 million "distance" education project for Africa.

The Security Council held informal consultations today in the wake of the newly proclaimed cease-fire in the Persian Gulf war, which all parties have agreed to.

Speaking to correspondents before the consultations began, the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Sir David Hannay, said the Council would be discussing what to do next. Members would take note of the very important developments since last night, namely the allied decision to cease active combat, and the Iraqi decision to accept and comply with the 12 Security Council resolutions.

Sir David said Council members would also be debating post-war arrangements, including the lifting of sanctions against Iraq and Kuwait and the release of prisoners of war.

The Ambassador of India, Chinmaya Rajaninath Gharekhan, told correspondents this afternoon there was agreement in the Council to hold an open meeting as soon as possible to finalize arrangements to make the de facto cease-fire permanent. He said India had strongly suggested that the Secretary-General should be requested to send an observer group to the region as soon as possible, and this would be the subject of Council consultations.

(more)

* * *

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar told news correspondents this morning the United Nations would be prepared to send an observer group to the Gulf as soon as possible, to undertake a peace-keeping function. He said it was up to the Security Council to decide what form the group would take, but he hoped it would consist of United Nations personnel instead of coalition forces.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar also expressed hope that the call by United States President George Bush for a cease-fire was the "beginning of the end of this terrible tragedy".

In a related development, the Secretary-General met this morning with the Foreign Minister of France, Roland Dumas, to discuss the possible peace-keeping role of the United Nations in the Gulf.

The Secretary-General's Spokesman emphasized later, in reply to questions by correspondents, that the contingency plans for a United Nations peace-keeping role in the area were purely hypothetical, since the hostilities had not formally ceased.

* * *

The Committee of the United Nations Trust Fund for South Africa met today at Headquarters to discuss ways and means to help victims of apartheid in South Africa. Among the subjects were current and future programmes for legal, humanitarian, educational and relief assistance to such victims.

The Trust Fund for South Africa, established by the General Assembly in 1965 and financed by voluntary contributions from Governments, organizations and individuals, has granted some \$40 million to organizations engaged in providing legal and humanitarian assistance to the victims of apartheid.

The participants at the meeting included representatives of voluntary organizations engaged in providing such assistance, prominent lawyers and representatives of national human rights and lawyers' associations from South Africa.

* * *

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) announced today that it has prepared a \$2 million draft project to advance the use of "distance" education in Africa as part of its "Priority Africa" programme adopted in 1989.

UNESCO's Director of Co-operation with African Member States, John Kabore, said today that distance education included systematic use of such facilities as radio, television and correspondence as a means of learning. He said distance education had a crucial role to play in Africa, considering the continent's numerous economic and social problems. The use of the communications media held a tremendous potential to educate the public and to share important information among those who need to know, Mr. Kabore said.

* * * * *

United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/838

1 March 1991

FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ Secretary-General to send representative to Kuwait-Iraq area to determine humanitarian role of United Nations following conflict.
- ◆ Former Prime Minister of Italy to assist Secretary-General in his efforts to help Government of Lebanon in its reconstruction.
- ◆ Security Council accepts Secretary-General's recommendation to end mandate of United Nations Observer Group monitoring cease-fire between Iraq and Iran.
- ◆ General Assembly President meets in Rome with Italian Ministers before leaving for two-day official visit to Albania.
- ◆ Food and Agriculture Organization announces \$56 million in emergency food aid to five African countries.
- ◆ Special Committee against Apartheid holds hearings of legal experts on human rights situation in South Africa.

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar announced today that he had decided to send Under-Secretary-General Martti Ahtisaari to the Kuwait-Iraq area on a short mission on his behalf. Mr. Ahtisaari would leave as soon as possible, and report back to the Secretary-General on what action the United Nations can take to help people in need.

The announcement was made at a press conference given by the heads of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), who reported on a joint WHO/UNICEF mission to Iraq.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar said he had met yesterday with a group of his senior colleagues to discuss different aspects of the situation in the Persian Gulf area, and, in particular, swift humanitarian emergency assistance to the people of Kuwait and Iraq.

(more)

It was agreed at the meeting, the Secretary-General said, that the United Nations system must react with all due speed in order to provide help urgently to those in need and to prevent further human suffering.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar said there had been considerable prior planning as far as emergency assistance was concerned. Various stocks had been pre-positioned in the vicinity of areas most affected by recent events. He added that the United Nations system stood ready in the period ahead to be of all possible help to the people in need.

James Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF, told correspondents the first United Nations mission in Kuwait had occurred today. Medical supplies had been pre-positioned in hospitals in Bahrain. He hoped that some of the vast military medical supplies could be made available in Iraq and Kuwait.

In a separate development, a United Nations official said today that the President of the Security Council for the month of March, Peter Hohenfellner (Austria), had been engaged in bilateral consultations on the Gulf situation throughout the day.

* * *

A United Nations official told correspondents today that the Secretary-General had met with his Personal Representative on Debt, former Prime Minister of Italy Bettino Craxi. They had discussed, among other things, the situation in the Mediterranean region and the Near East with particular regard to Lebanon and the United Nations responsibilities to assist that country in its reconstruction. The official said further that Mr. Craxi had accepted a request by the Secretary-General that he join him in his efforts to mobilize all possible resources to help the Lebanese Government in its rehabilitation process.

* * *

Members of the Security Council have accepted a recommendation from the Secretary-General to end the mandate of the United Nations Observer Group monitoring the cease-fire between Iraq and Iran (UNIIMOG). The Secretary-General was informed of the Council's agreement in a letter dated 28 February, from the Council President.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar had recommended in a report that the mandate of the Group not be extended beyond 25 February. He said the withdrawal of forces of the two sides to the internationally recognized boundaries as described in the 1975 Treaty concerning the State Frontier and Neighbourly Relations between Iran and Iraq had at last been completed.

In a letter to the Council President on 26 February, the Secretary-General said he envisaged the establishment in Iran and Iraq of a group of civilian officers who would be able to give an assessment of

(more)

developments in the area. He said the continued presence of a few military observers attached to those civilian officers would allow the United Nations to respond promptly to any irregularities in the area.

* * *

The President of the General Assembly, Guido de Marco of Malta, today left Rome for a three-day official visit to Albania.

Mr. de Marco is conducting a series of official visits in his capacity as Assembly President and also as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Malta.

While in Rome, President de Marco met with Pope John Paul II and Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti. He also had talks with the Italian Foreign Minister, Gianni de Michelis, on the international situation generally, with particular reference to the Gulf situation and to security matters in Europe and the Mediterranean. He also received Ambassador Suk Kyu Kim of the Republic of Korea who delivered a letter to him from the Korean Foreign Minister.

Before leaving Rome, the President met with Ambassador Ahmad Ghaith Abdullah of Kuwait to convey a message of congratulations and solidarity on the liberation of his country.

* * *

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) announced today in Rome that it will provide emergency food aid worth more than \$45 million for an estimated 1.3 million persons affected by drought and civil strife in Ethiopia.

The Organization said emergency food aid totalling some \$11 million will also be sent to Uganda, Chad, Guinea-Bissau and Cameroon.

* * *

The Special Committee against Apartheid met today to hear statements from legal experts on the situation of human rights in South Africa.

The Acting Chairman of the Committee, Jai Pratap Rana (Nepal), said there still existed obstacles to negotiations for a united, non-racial democratic society in South Africa which must be removed.

He said the recent death of lawyer Bheki Mlangeni showed that there were forces in South Africa that were opposed to the ongoing process of change and were intent on using violent methods to derail it. The democratic forces in South Africa needed the international community's support more than ever. That support could be manifested by keeping the pressure on Pretoria, the Committee Chairman said.

* * * * *

United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/839
4 March 1991

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ Security Council demands that Iraq implement its acceptance of all previous Council resolutions on Iraq-Kuwait situation; Foreign Minister of Iraq states in letter to Council President that Iraq agrees to fulfil those obligations; Council subsequently calls on Sanctions Committee to act promptly on requests for humanitarian assistance stemming from situation.
- ◆ International Committee of Red Cross informs United Nations that convoy carrying 10 prisoners of war released by Iraq is due to arrive in Amman tonight.
- ◆ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific says Gulf crisis reduces remittances, export earnings, including tourism, to Asia-Pacific region.
- ◆ President of General Assembly meets with Foreign Minister of Albania during official visit to that country.
- ◆ Ilter Turkmen assumes post as Commissioner-General of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

* * *

The Security Council meet in two open meetings over the weekend to address the situation in the Persian Gulf.

On Saturday, 2 March, in its first open meeting on the subject since the end of November, the Council demanded that Iraq implement its acceptance of all its previous 12 resolutions stemming from Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait.

The Council acted by adopting resolution 686 (1991), in which it also recognized that the provisions of resolution 678 (1990) remained valid. In that text, the Council had authorized Member States "to use all necessary means" to restore international peace and security in the area.

(more)

4 March 1991

The vote on the draft text, sponsored by Belgium, France, Romania, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States and Zaire, was 11 in favour to 1 against (Cuba), with 3 abstentions (China, India, Yemen).

Under the terms of the resolution, the Council demanded that Iraq repeal all Iraqi laws annexing Kuwait; accept its liability for war losses and damages; release all Kuwaiti and third country civilian detainees; and begin immediately to return all Kuwaiti property it had seized. The text also called on Iraq to cease hostile actions, send its military commanders to discuss the cessation of hostilities, arrange for immediate access to and release of all prisoners of war, and assist in identifying Iraqi mines, booby traps and other explosives.

Before the vote on the text, the Council voted to reject 17 Cuban amendments to the draft. Under the proposed revisions, the Council would have decided on an immediate cease-fire, requesting the Secretary-General to deploy a United Nations peace-keeping force in the area. All Member States would have been asked to provide humanitarian assistance to Iraq and Kuwait.

In addition, the amendments would have deleted all reference to the continued validity of the Council's earlier authorization to Member States to use "all necessary means" to implement its resolutions on the Iraq-Kuwait situation.

While these amendments were not adopted, the Council met again Sunday evening, 3 March, to address the humanitarian aspects of the situation. It called upon the Sanctions Committee established under resolution 661 (1990) "to continue to act promptly on requests submitted to it for humanitarian assistance" stemming from the situation between Iraq and Kuwait.

Through a statement read out by its President, Peter Hohenfellner of Austria, the Council urged the Sanctions Committee to pay particular attention to recommendations on critical medical, public health and nutritional conditions in Iraq submitted to it by the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other organizations.

The Council also welcomed Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar's decision to send an urgent mission led by Under-Secretary-General Martti Ahtisaari to the area to assess the needs. It invited the Secretary-General to keep it informed "in the shortest possible time" on the progress of his mission, on which it pledged to take immediate action.

Also on Sunday, the United Nations received a letter from Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, saying the Iraqi Government would "fulfil its obligations" under Saturday's resolution. He asked the Security Council to declare a formal cease-fire and to lift all sanctions against Baghdad.

In a separate development, the Secretary-General commented this morning on the humanitarian mission to go to Iraq and Kuwait, saying he hoped it would leave in a couple of days.

(more)

In reply to questions by correspondents, the Secretary-General said he was happy that the humanitarian work was being coordinated with the Security Council. It was up to the Council, he said, to decide when to lift the sanctions against Iraq and Kuwait, but he hoped it would happen as soon as possible.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) informed the United Nations today that it had picked up the 10 prisoners of war released this morning by Iraq and was now heading to Amman, to hand them over to their respective Governments. The Committee said the prisoners -- six American, three British and one Italian -- were expected to arrive in Amman tonight.

On Saturday, the Red Cross announced that it had sent a team to Kuwait City to assess medical and sanitation requirements and to provide protection for all foreign nationals who did not yet have diplomatic representation in Kuwait.

Most Asian-Pacific countries' economies have worsened during 1990 -- a backlash of the Persian Gulf crisis -- according to a new report by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The region's five net oil exporters, however, were not affected economically by the crisis.

The report said the countries most severely affected by the Gulf conflict were eight developing countries members of ESCAP -- Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka and Thailand -- which were over \$7 billion short on their balance of payments for last year.

The United Nations trade embargo on Iraq, the report added, accounted for these countries' loss in exports of almost \$1 billion and a loss in remittances of nearly \$1.5 billion.

According to ESCAP, the major impact came from the increase in oil prices. Considering that the price of oil averaged \$25 per barrel for the whole of 1990, the net oil-importing countries stood to lose nearly \$5 billion. The gains of the five net oil-exporting developing countries of the region -- Brunei Darussalam, China, Indonesia, Iran and Malaysia -- would amount to about \$8 billion.

The Commission also warned in its report that the Pacific island region might see a future reduction in development assistance, given the uncertainties in the global environment. This would hamper the region's attempt to finance badly needed infrastructure development, the report stated.

The Commission is scheduled to hold its forty-seventh session in Seoul from 1 to 10 April.

(more)

★ ★ ★

The President of the General Assembly, Guido de Marco (Malta), met over the weekend with senior officials in Albania, while on a visit at the invitation of the Government.

Yesterday, the President met with leaders of three political parties who discussed plans for free national elections in the country, scheduled for the end of March. He also met with representatives of the Albanian Human Rights Forum for a review of the human rights situation in Albania.

On Saturday evening, the President met with Foreign Minister Muhamet Kapllani to discuss political developments in Albania and cooperation between the United Nations and Albania. In his capacity as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Malta, Mr. de Marco discussed with the Albanian Foreign Minister the roles of Malta and Albania in the peace and security process in Europe and the Mediterranean.

★ ★ ★

Ilter Turkmen of Turkey today assumed his post as Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

He replaces Giorgio Giacomelli of Italy, who has been appointed Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme.

Mr. Turkmen comes to UNRWA from Paris, where he has served as Turkey's Ambassador to France since 1988. Before that, he served two terms as Turkey's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York (1985-1988 and 1975-1978) and one term (1983-1985) as his country's representative at the United Nations Office at Geneva. From 1980 to 1983, Mr. Turkmen served as Foreign Minister of Turkey. He has also been Ambassador to the Soviet Union and Greece and, from 1979 to 1980, served as Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Thailand, dealing with humanitarian issues.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/840
5 March 1991

T U E S D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

- ◆ Iraq protests to United Nations against acts of what it calls "flagrant and unjustified provocations" by United States military.
- ◆ International Committee of Red Cross informs United Nations of release by Iraq of further 35 prisoners of war.
- ◆ Ways of helping almost 3 million migrant workers and their families who have fled from Gulf region are discussed at International Labour Organisation session in Geneva.
- ◆ International Maritime Organization calls for Gulf pollution disaster fund.
- ◆ Commission adopts resolution calling for women to fill 35 per cent of United Nations Professional posts by 1995.

* * *

The Government of Iraq has protested to the United Nations against two acts of what it calls "flagrant and unjustified provocations" by the United States military.

In a letter to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz complained about United States aircraft, which he said had deliberately broken the sound barrier over Baghdad four times, "terrorizing" civilians, particularly children. He said the terror was a result of the loud noise and the shaking of buildings and houses produced by the aircraft.

The Iraqi Minister also complained that armed United States troops had been discharged from six helicopters on the Baghdad-Amman road in an area which, he said, was distant from the theatre of operations.

The Government of Iraq condemned those acts saying they were inconsistent with the agreement reached between allied troops and Iraq at a military meeting at Safwan last Saturday.

(more)

2206P

For information media—not an official record

In a separate development, a United Nations official said today that the President of the Security Council, Peter Hohenfellner (Austria), was holding bilateral consultations with Council members on a number of issues, including preparation of reports on the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), Western Sahara and the occupied Arab territories. The President was scheduled to meet later this afternoon with the Iraqi Ambassador, Abdul Amir A. Al-Anbari.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has informed the United Nations that Iraq handed over 35 prisoners of war this morning in Baghdad.

The prisoners -- 15 American, 9 British, 9 Saudi, 1 Italian and 1 Kuwaiti -- were to be flown to Riyadh by the Red Cross, to meet representatives of their respective countries as soon as weather conditions permitted.

Yesterday, the Committee announced that 10 prisoners of war released by Iraq had been collected, and were being taken to Amman where they were to be handed over to their respective Governments.

Ways of helping the almost 3 million migrant workers and their families who had fled from the Gulf region have been discussed at the spring session in Geneva of the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

At the session, which ended on Friday, participants addressed the dramatic situation of many of those workers and their families in Kuwait and Iraq who had fled the area as a result of the Gulf crisis and had suffered considerable losses in terms of unpaid salaries and lost effects and savings. Having returned to their countries of origin, they were now facing serious employment problems.

Among those addressing the session, ILO Director-General Michel Hansenne said the crisis had made clear to all that the migration system in the region was flawed. He said the time had come to bring the recruitment and employment of migrant workers closer to ILO standards in countries of employment as well as in countries of origin. The ILO was willing to help any country in that respect.

A call for the establishment of an international fund to help combat the oil spill in the Gulf was made today by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations agency concerned with maritime safety and the prevention of pollution from ships.

(more)

The primary purpose of the fund would be to facilitate fielding of equipment and services offered in recent weeks so as to catalyse efforts now being made by coastal States to tackle the disaster.

When the disaster first became apparent at the end of January, IMO established a centre at its London headquarters to coordinate the international response. Many countries offered assistance to States in the Gulf region through IMO, as envisaged in the International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Cooperation 1990. That Convention was adopted at a conference convened by IMO in November and is intended to establish an international system for responding to oil spill disasters such as the one in the Gulf.

Current indications are that the spill consists of between 1.5 and 2 million barrels of oil, making it one of the worst spills ever.

* * *

The Commission on the Status of Women, now in session in Vienna, has adopted a draft text calling for women to fill 35 per cent of United Nations Professional posts by 1995.

By the text, the Economic and Social Council would urge the Secretary-General to increase the number of women in posts subject to geographical distribution, especially at the senior policy and decision-making levels.

The Council would also urged the Secretary-General to accord priority to increasing the participation rate of women to 25 per cent in senior management posts at the D-1 level and above, taking into consideration those from developing countries and countries with a small representation of women.

The Commission also continued debate on the priority themes of equality, development and peace, focusing on the problems of refugee and displaced women and children, young women and the integration of women in the development process.

* * * * *

United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/841
6 March 1991

W E D N E S D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

- ◆ Government of Iraq informs United Nations of its decision to return Kuwaiti property seized after its occupation of Kuwait on 2 August.
- ◆ International Committee of the Red Cross transports 294 Iraqi prisoners of war to Baghdad from Saudi Arabia.
- ◆ Austria and Spain announce contributions to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees.
- ◆ International Labour Organisation experts conclude that international pressure is still needed to break apartheid.

The Government of Iraq has informed the United Nations that it has decided to return Kuwaiti property which it seized after its occupation of Kuwait on 2 August.

In a letter to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz said Iraq was prepared to hand over Kuwaiti gold and paper currency, museum objects and civilian aircraft as soon as possible. He also asked to be informed about the procedures for carrying out the handover.

The Iraqi decision comes in response to the latest of the Council's resolutions which demanded that Iraq accept all previous 12 resolutions on the Iraq-Kuwait situation, including an immediate return of all Kuwaiti property it had seized.

In another communication to the United Nations, the Government of Israel has called on United Nations Member States to draw the "inevitable conclusions" on what it called "the true character of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)", which it said was revealed during the Gulf crisis. In a letter to the Secretary-General on 1 March, made available today, the Permanent Representative of Israel, Yoram Aridor, said PLO officials had repeatedly backed Iraq's aggression in the Gulf crisis.

(more)

In a letter to the Secretary-General yesterday, the Acting Chairman of the Committee on Palestinian Rights, Ricardo Alarcon de Quesada of Cuba, expressed the Committee's condemnation of what he called "the continuous mass detention of Palestinian civilians, including minors". He said Amnesty International had reported that some 14,000 Palestinians had been held in detention without charge or trial since December 1987. Such detention, he said, was a "collective punishment" by the Israeli authorities against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory and was in violation of the 1947 Geneva Convention.

He said the Committee appealed to the Secretary-General to take immediately all necessary action to free the detainees, and to ensure the safety and protection of Palestinians in the occupied territory, including Jerusalem.

* * *

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) announced today that it had transported 294 Iraqi prisoners of war on two ICRC aircraft to Baghdad from Saudi Arabia.

The ICRC said it had inspected all prisoners in accordance with the provisions of the Third Geneva Convention, before sending them to Iraq.

* * *

Austria has contributed \$1 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) earmarked for Palestine refugee schoolchildren who have enrolled in Agency schools in Jordan due to the Gulf crisis. The contribution is to help cover the costs faced by UNRWA in accommodating an extra 2,500 Palestine refugee children who arrived in Jordan from the Gulf between August and December 1990.

Spain has announced a contribution to UNRWA of about \$207,000 for the Agency's project to build a 200-bed general hospital in Israeli-occupied Gaza. The Agency has announced that it needs contributions to cover the \$35 million required to build and equip a hospital in Gaza, and run it for the first three years.

* * *

The South African economy has been seriously affected by international financial sanctions aimed at the suppression of apartheid, according to a study by a team of independent experts appointed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The team also concluded that sanctions had not been universal and further pressure was needed.

The report said sanctions by the world community had led to a heavy outflow of foreign capital, a significant contraction of new inflows of investment capital and a nationwide economic malaise aggravated by the mounting burden of foreign debts.

(more)

Between 1985 and the end of June 1989, the total outflow of capital from South Africa amounted to about \$40 billion, the report stated. Nevertheless, experts noted, the sanctions had not been water-tight. Some international banks and even Governments continued to extend financial support to the Government through such measures as rescheduling of foreign debts and extension of trade credits.

The independent experts called for the maintenance of financial sanctions as a tool of applying pressure on the Government to end the system of apartheid.

* *** *

United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/842
7 March 1991

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- + Secretary-General to dispatch mission to Kuwait at Government's request to assess loss of civilians and infrastructure damage during Iraqi occupation.
- + Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait informs United Nations that his Government has resumed functions of State.
- + Talks to define repatriation procedures for all prisoners of war and civilian detainees begin in Riyadh under auspices of International Committee of Red Cross.
- + Human Rights Commission condemns Iraqi violations in Kuwait; also adopts resolutions on situations in Iran, southern Lebanon, El Salvador and Albania, among other issues.

* * *

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar is to send a high-level mission to Kuwait to assess the loss of civilians and infrastructure damage during Iraqi occupation.

The decision was made in response to a request by the Kuwaiti Government, and in response to the Security Council which had asked the Secretary-General to respond positively to that request.

In a statement yesterday, the Secretary-General's Spokesman said the task of the mission was to receive pertinent information from the Kuwaiti authorities, as well as non-governmental organizations, for an assessment of the losses in life during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. In addition, the mission would gather information on Iraqi practices against the civilian population in Kuwait. It would also assess the scope and nature of the damages that were inflicted on Kuwait's infrastructure during the period.

The mission, to be led by Abdulrahim A. Farah, former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, will travel to the region early next week. It will include representatives and technical advisors from a number of United

(more)

Nations humanitarian organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

It is the second United Nations mission to be sent to the Persian Gulf after the recent hostilities. Last Thursday, the Secretary-General announced that he was sending Under-Secretary-General Martti Ahtisaari on a humanitarian mission to assess the needs of the population in Iraq and Kuwait. Mr. Ahtisaari left New York today.

* * *

The Kuwaiti Government has informed the United Nations that it is resuming the functions of State, and is directing the affairs of the nation from Kuwait City. During Iraqi occupation, the Kuwaiti Government was in exile in Saudi Arabia.

In a letter to the Secretary-General, Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah thanked the United Nations for the role it played in liberating Kuwait. That action, he said, had reconfirmed the purposes and objectives of the United Nations Charter and had shown the importance of the Organization in maintaining international peace and security.

In a separate development, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has called on the Government of Kuwait to take immediate action to guarantee the safety of Palestinians living in that country.

In a letter to the Secretary-General, the Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine, Nasser Al-Kidwa, said a campaign of terror and harassment was being conducted against Palestinians in Kuwait City. The violence was being waged by armed vigilantes and some elements of the Kuwaiti army. The PLO representative said the majority of Palestinians in Kuwait were long-time residents and should be protected. It was the responsibility of the Kuwaiti Government, the foreign forces present in Kuwait and the Security Council to guarantee their safety and security.

In another letter received by the Secretary-General, the Government of Kuwait rejected allegations by PLO that official authorities in Kuwait had initiated "certain practices" against the Palestinian community living in Kuwait. The letter said Kuwait's Minister for Foreign Affairs had declared the allegations were false, and deliberately circulated by irresponsible parties in Palestinian circles, to "spread a spirit of resentment and disunity" and to "cast themselves as defenders of the fraternal Palestinian people".

The Foreign Minister said Kuwait had embraced expatriates from all parts of the world, including the Palestinian community, and provided them with the means to make a decent and comfortable living. That was on the basis of its belief in its Arab, Islamic and humanitarian obligations, and its constant commitment to Arab values and principles.

(more)

* * *

The International Committee of the Red Cross reported today that talks under its auspices between the Iraqi and Kuwaiti authorities and coalition representatives to define procedures for the repatriation of all prisoners of war and civilian detainees had begun this morning in Riyadh.

The Committee also announced that it had sent a team to Basra in Iraq to assess humanitarian needs there. The team was to be followed by a convoy carrying medicines and food.

* * *

The Commission on Human Rights, continuing its session in Geneva, has strongly condemned the Iraqi authorities and occupying forces for the grave violations of human rights against the Kuwaiti people and nationals of other States.

The Commission also acted yesterday on resolutions concerning, among other issues, the human rights situations in southern Lebanon, Cuba, Romania, Iraq, El Salvador, Albania, Haiti and Afghanistan.

By the resolution on the situation of human rights in Kuwait under Iraqi occupation, the Commission strongly condemned, in particular, the acts of torture, arbitrary arrests, summary executions and disappearances. It demanded that Iraq comply with its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and the contemporary norms of international law.

The Commission decided to appoint an individual of recognized international standing as special rapporteur with a mandate to examine the human rights violations committed in occupied Kuwait by the invading and occupying forces of Iraq and to report as soon as possible to the General Assembly and to the Commission on Human Rights at its next session.

Abdul Al-Kadhi (Iraq) said the resolution was filled with "baseless, pointless and political allegations"; Iraq had agreed to all Security Council resolutions and had accepted the help of humanitarian organizations. The resolution was adopted by 41 votes in favour 1 against, with no abstentions.

In the other resolutions, the Commission condemned the continued Israeli violations of human rights in southern Lebanon. It noted particularly the arbitrary detention of civilian populations and called on Israel to end such practices and to begin an immediate, total and unconditional withdrawal from all Lebanese territory. Israel was asked to facilitate the humanitarian mission of International Committee of the Red Cross.

In a resolution on the situation of human rights in El Salvador, the Commission expressed serious concern at the persistence of politically motivated violations of human rights, such as summary executions, abductions

(more)

and enforced disappearances. It urged the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) to continue their dialogue and to work towards ensuring democratic elections scheduled for 10 March next year.

A resolution on the situation of human rights in Albania called on the Government of that country to free all political prisoners and adopt, as soon as possible, legislative and administrative measures to meet the requirements under international law.

At today's meeting, the Commission decided to continue consideration of the human rights situation in Iran, noting with concern the allegations of violations and requesting its Special Representative, Reynaldo Galindo Pohl, to maintain his contacts and cooperation with the Government of Iran. The Commission also welcomed the full cooperation extended by the Government of Iran to the Special Representative.

* * * * *

United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/843
8 March 1991

FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- + International Women's Day dedicated this year to refugee women, observed at United Nations Headquarters.
- + International Committee of the Red Cross receives two United States prisoners and 40 journalists released by Iraqi authorities in Baghdad.
- + Prince Sadruddin Aga Kahn asks to be relieved of present duties as Secretary-General's Personal Representative for humanitarian assistance relating to Iraq-Kuwait crisis.
- + United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees appeals for \$10 million to help Somali and Ethiopian refugees; also asks Italian authorities to allow Albanian refugees arriving by sea to land in Italy and be given help.
- + Commission on Status of Women ends session in Vienna adopting resolutions on international protection to refugee women, among other issues.

* * *

The United Nations observed today as International Women's Day. The annual observance was this year dedicated to refugee women.

In a statement Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar called on the international community to redouble its efforts to provide protection and assistance for women refugees throughout the world. Noting that half of the world's 15 million refugees were women, he said those women were generally the victims of circumstances they did not control and of political decisions in which they did not participate. Nevertheless, he said, the burden to maintain their families economically, socially and culturally had fallen on them.

The Secretary-General emphasized that the focus today on refugee women -- a group of women who were among the least fortunate -- should encourage the international community to do its utmost to enable all women to enjoy equality, development and peace.

(more)

* * *

The International Committee of the Red Cross announced today that it had received two United States prisoners and 40 journalists who had been handed over by Iraqi authorities in Baghdad.

The Committee said the two prisoners were released into its care under an agreement reached yesterday in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, providing for the repatriation of all prisoners of war and civilians detained in the Persian Gulf conflict.

* * *

The Secretary-General's Spokesman today told correspondents that Sadruddin Aga Kahn had asked to be relieved of his present duties as Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar's Personal Representative for humanitarian assistance relating to the Iraq-Kuwait crisis.

The request was made following the meeting in New York on 28 February of United Nations agencies on humanitarian assistance to the Gulf area.

The spokesman said the Secretary-General hoped to be able to count on the cooperation of Sadruddin Aga Kahn in United Nations humanitarian activities in the follow-up to the mission to the region being undertaken by Under-Secretary-General Martti Ahtisaari, once Mr. Ahtisaari had presented his report to the Secretary-General.

It was stated that in addition to United Nations officials, the mission aircraft would be carrying over 20 tons of relief items to Iraq, in accordance with the decision taken yesterday by the Security Council's Sanctions Committee.

* * *

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sadako Ogata, today launched an appeal for \$10 million to help meet the urgent needs of 350,000 Somali refugees, as well as Ethiopian refugees who have returned to Ethiopia over the past two months.

In a communiqué, UNHCR reported that the situation had reached dramatic proportions and required particularly urgent attention on the part of the international community. The number of refugees and repatriates under its care in Ethiopia was now 1.2 million.

The UNHCR said further that the distribution of aid was hampered by the severe shortage of fuel in the country as a result of the Gulf crisis. It said efforts were now under way to obtain provisions of fuel and to hire lorries to obtain large quantities of water to be sent urgently to the affected regions.

(more)

In a separate development, UNHCR has reiterated its concern about any measures which could deny Albanian asylum-candidates access to refugee status in Italy. In a statement, the High Commissioner's Office said it had asked the Italian authorities to allow Albanians arriving by sea in reportedly precarious conditions to land in Italy and be given whatever help they needed. The Office said it had offered to work closely with the Italian Government to organize assistance and to help set up procedures to examine the eligibility of the Albanians for refugee status.

The UNHCR said that more than 11,000 Albanians had already arrived in Italy by sea.

* * *

The Commission on the Status of Women ended its thirty-fifth session in Vienna today, hearing calls on the world community to extend international protection to refugee women. In a resolution adopted by consensus, the Commission asked Governments to implement measures that would ensure refugee women greater protection from physical violence, sexual abuse, abduction and circumstances that could force them into illegal activities.

Among other issues, the Commission also acted on measures related to the special needs of disabled women, and proposals to curb violence against women.

With the last day of the session coinciding with International Women's Day, the Director-General of the United Nations Office in Vienna, Margaret Anstee, said that as the Organization was striving to remove the causes that had forced refugee women to leave their homes, it would also endeavour to ensure that the measures which were taken reinforced the overall goals for the advancement of women.

* * * * *

United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/844
11 March 1991

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- + United Nations mission to assess humanitarian emergency needs of population of Iraq and Kuwait arrives in Baghdad; separate mission to assess Iraqi practices against Kuwaiti civilian population leaves Headquarters for Bahrain.
- + Secretary-General sends small United Nations team to Albania to assist Government in present humanitarian circumstances.
- + Government of Angola agrees to resumption of United Nations Special Relief Programme for Angola.
- + Human Rights Commission concludes session in Geneva during which it adopted 82 resolutions.

The humanitarian mission to assess the emergency needs of the population of Iraq and Kuwait arrived yesterday afternoon in Baghdad from Amman, Jordan, where the head of the mission, Under-Secretary-General Martti Ahtisaari had talks with Jordanian Foreign Minister Taher Al-Masri.

The Secretary-General's spokeswoman told correspondents today that Mr. Ahtisaari and the mission met yesterday evening with the Iraqi Minister of State, Mohammad Said Al-Sahaf, and representatives of various government departments. Working groups established to assist the mission with its mandate of assessing emergency needs held their first meetings last night. Mr. Ahtisaari was expected to remain in Iraq until 18 March, after which he is scheduled to travel to Kuwait.

Apart from members of the Secretariat, the 20-person mission included representatives from several United Nations humanitarian organizations. It travelled to Baghdad last Thursday in an aircraft supplied to the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO) by the Argentine Government, which also carried 20 tons of urgent medical supplies.

(more)

In a separate announcement, the spokeswoman said the other United Nations mission to the area, led by former Under-Secretary-General Abdulrahim A. Farah, to assess the loss of civilian lives and infrastructure damage in Kuwait during the Iraqi occupation, was leaving New York this afternoon and flying to Bahrain.

The 12-member mission was expected to arrive in Kuwait on Saturday on a plane provided by the Kuwaiti Government, she said, adding that Mr. Farah expected the mission to remain in Kuwait for approximately two weeks.

The spokeswoman also announced that the Secretary-General's Personal Representative in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Benon Sevan, arrived in Moscow yesterday for talks with the Soviet authorities concerning the political settlement of the Afghan question.

Before leaving for Moscow, Mr. Sevan held talks with President Najibullah of Afghanistan in Kabul last Wednesday, and with Prime Minister Muhammed Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan in Islamabad last Saturday.

In another announcement today, the spokeswoman said that yesterday the Secretary-General had sent to Albania, at the request of that Government, a small United Nations team to assist it in "the present humanitarian circumstances". The mission was headed by Steffan de Mistura, Special Envoy on Albania, accompanied by two members of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Thousands of Albanians have been fleeing to Italy by sea. The UNHCR appealed last week to the Italian Government to set up procedures to determine whether the asylum-seekers qualified for political refugee status.

It was announced at Headquarters today that the Government of Angola had agreed to the resumption of the United Nations Special Relief Programme for Angola. The agreement came as a result of the second round of talks on 6 and 7 March between a senior United Nations official and the Government of Angola to examine thoroughly problems which had arisen in the implementation of the Programme.

Following those meetings, the President of Angola, José Eduardo dos Santos, and the Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Questions, Regional Cooperation, Decolonization and Trusteeship, James O.C. Jonah, issued a communiqué saying that the Government's decision was taken on the basis of firm assurances given by the United Nations that appropriate arrangements would be worked out to ensure that the principles underlying the Programme would be honoured. According to the communiqué, the United Nations undertook to ensure that nothing would be done to violate the sovereignty of Angola.

(more)

Both sides further agreed that there was urgent necessity to institute a proper machinery for consultations with a view to avoiding any misunderstanding in the operation of the Programme.

It was also agreed that the Secretary-General should renew his urgent appeal for humanitarian assistance to Angola since the response to the earlier appeal had been disappointing.

The first round of talks was held in Angola from 22 to 25 February.

* * *

The Commission on Human Rights ended its forty-seventh session in Geneva on Friday after adopting its report to the Economic and Social Council.

In a closing statement, the Chairman, Enrique Bernales Ballesteros of Peru, said the last decade could be said to have been a lost decade from an economic point of view, but from the point of view of political developments, it had been a decade for human rights. The active commitment to human rights of non-State actors, such as non-governmental organizations, was the best example of dedication to human rights.

Mr. Bernales Ballesteros said that of the 82 resolutions adopted by the Commission, 75 were by consensus -- a significant 91.4 per cent. He added that the work undertaken in preparation for the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights was of paramount importance.

The Commission also approved its provisional agenda for its 1993 session, which included issues such as the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine; self-determination; South Africa, apartheid and racism; economic, social and cultural rights; right to development; status of covenants; and treaty bodies.

* * * * *